

Environmental after  
the red cross  
stressed in its



Environmental scientist Norman Myers, who wrote several papers in the 1990s and early 2000s to alert policy-makers and public opinion about the 'growing phenomenon' represented by 'environmental refugees' (Myers, 1993, 1997, 2002; Myers and Kent, 1995). All of these papers contained estimates and predictions of the number of people displaced by environmental change. He said that in 1995 25 million people displaced because of environmental changes (Myers and Kent, 1995). This number appears to be based on a compilation of different regional or country reports, some of them conducted by Myers, including 5 million in the Sahel, 'where a full 10 million had fled from recent droughts, only half returning home' (Myers, 2002) and 7 million in other parts of Africa, seeking relief food all of which moved to areas of northern Africa i.

e. Libya and tried mostly unsuccessfully to cross borders in Europe due to Libyan dictator Gaddafi's good interrelations with the Italian prime minister Berlusconi. However the mutually beneficial relationship between the European Union and northern Africa has collapsed allowing an unhappy Europe to deal with the refugee crisis by itself. The credibility of the figure was reinforced after the Red Cross stressed in its 2001 World Disasters Report that more people were forced to leave their homes because of environmental disasters than war (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2001). This claim was based on operational reports from the Red Cross activities in the field.

The figure of 25 million was also quoted in the famously controversial report of the NGO Christian Aid, 'Human Tide' (Christian Aid, 2007). Estimates on the number of migrants due to catastrophic events such as natural

disasters are more extensive and less controversial. The latest and most accurate study is the one released in June 2011 by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center and the Norwegian Refugee Council (Yenotani, 2011). The study reviews comprehensively the natural hazard-induced disasters that occurred in 2009 and 2010, and concludes that 17 million people were displaced by such disasters in 2009, and 42 million in 2010, most of them in Asia which is currently not having a large effect on environmental refugee influx in Europe. The forecast of 150 million displaced by 2050 takes into account the demographic expansion of developing countries as well as the deteriorating environmental conditions. Amongst these, Myers considers principally sea-level rise and desertification.

His forecast is based on the number of people that are expected to live in the regions at risk by 2050: in a deterministic manner, Myers assumes that all these people will be forced to leave. He separated these numbers into geographical locations which he estimates to be under stress.

Bangladesh: 26 million, Egypt: 12 million, China: 73 million, India: 20 million and other parts of the world, including small island states: 31 million i. e. Tavulu and the Maldives being some of the first affected.

Whilst it is extremely difficult to predict the direct cause of individual environmental refuge it is widely believed within the scientific community that 250 million people will be permanently displaced because of climate-change related phenomena such as droughts, famines, floods and hurricanes by 2050. Even if half of these migrants arrived on Europe's shores there would be an immediate crisis due to the inability of the European Union and

individual governments to accept responsibility for providing appropriate infrastructure for these people.